MEETING MINUTES

Finance Committee April 15, 2009

CALL TO ORDER

Time -6:00 P.M.

Members in attendance: Chairman Joanne F. Marden, S. Jon Stumpf, Mary O'Donoghue, Cindy Milne, Richard T. Howe, Mark Merritt, Paul Fortier and Stephen Stapinski.

Also present: Anthony J. Torrisi, Finance Director, and Town Manager Reginald Stapczynski

CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF BUDGET ISSUES

The Town Manager was asked to join tonight's meeting to answer Committee questions regarding current budget issues. The following issues were discussed:

Cell Tower – Police Chief Pattullo was reported to have told the Finance Committee liaison that no further income would be forthcoming from the cell tower and that he would be able to achieve budget cuts as noted in the Town Manager's Budget.

Retirement Incentives – The Town Manager reported that all departments are investigating retirements as one way to relieve their budgets. He added the Town is seeing a slow down in retirements, most likely due to decreases to retirement funds.

State Budget – Mr. Stapczynski reported that the House Ways & Means delivered their budget. He told Committee members that the Quinn Bill was adversely affected. Brief discussion followed. The Town Manager added that it was still early in the budget process and that the Town should have more information the following month at which time adjustments could be made. He raised the possibility that a Special Town Meeting may be necessary. In addition, Mr. Torrisi stated that the Town is currently working diligently with unions and department heads in order to close revenue deficits.

Free Cash – Mr. Stapczynski suggested using the CIP Fund instead of Free Cash for operating budgets. Discussion followed including the option of covering the SPED deficit with Free Cash. All were in agreement that this would have to be discussed with the School Superintendent and School Committee before consensus could be reached.

Accumulated Employee Benefit – The Town is looking at options to lower the amount.

There was a brief discussion on how to fund articles not funded by Free Cash. It was noted that several options currently being discussed by department heads included a 1% decrease in pay for union members, non-paid furloughs and retirement incentives. It was also noted that past early retirement programs had proved not to be advantageous to the Town. The Finance Committee voiced opposition to that option.

Transportation Costs – There was some discussion regarding putting caps on the bidding process. Committee members voiced agreement with this option. However, Mr. Stapinski countered that the level of service was the problem, not necessarily the RFP.

Ms. Marden asked Committee members if they were comfortable with voting for the School Budget without seeing budget details. All agreed not at this time.

Public Works – Discussion on three unresolved budget issues: Solid Waste, Street Lighting and Snow & Ice Removal. Mr. Stapczynski reported that Public Works along with National Grid, were currently analyzing neighborhoods for decreased street lighting. He acknowledged that his charge is to find an additional \$100,000 in savings for the Street Lighting FY2011 Budget. Mr. Stapczynski also informed Committee members that there would be a savings of \$30,000 to \$40,000 in the Trash request for FY2010. After a brief discussion, Committee members expressed interest in mandatory recycling. Ms. Marden noted that after reviewing Snow & Ice Removal costs for the past five years, she felt that this budget had been unfairly characterized relative to the behavior of the numbers.

The following departments and options for bringing in revenue were discussed:

General Government

- Retirement attrition
- Vacancies
- Fees to be instituted July 1
- Job consolidation (personnel and services)

Police

- Cut to New Horizon Program
- Use of flagmen to replace officers (Not in current budget, to be reviewed for future years)

Youth, Elder and Community Services

• Fee increases (no reduction in programs or personnel)

Library

- Thursday evening closings (suggestion discussed to reduce staff rather than PM closing)
- Reduced acquisition amounts

Plant & Facilities

- Increased fees for sports field use
- Increased fees for compost site

There was a brief discussion regarding privatization of municipal cemeteries. This discussion was tabled for review next year.

NEXT MEETING

Regular Finance Committee Meeting Wednesday, April 22, 2009 7:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT – 8:05 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted, Carolyn Lynch Recording Secretary